



THE FRONT OF THE CLUBHOUSE

(NINETY TWO)

**Those issues which had affected the club during the 1950s, '60s and '70s continued to dominate proceedings in the 1980s. The threat of losing part of the course to a proposed by-pass was every bit as real. Thoughts frequently turned to the land adjoining the course and its possible purchase, both as a safeguard against housing development and as somewhere to build new holes, should any be lost to the road. The death in December 1979 of Farmer Platt, who owned just such land, was both a reminder that the club may need to act swiftly and also a stimulus to a Committee dedicated to the future of the club.**

The turnover of club professionals had been considerable since the death of Hancock. In August 1980 the trend continued when a letter of resignation was received from John Goodwin, the current Professional. Roger Tattersall of Whitby Golf Club was appointed to succeed him from December.

As for the road, it made its next appearance in April 1981. Tom Arnold MP wrote to give details of a blue route and an alternative blue route for the Hazel Grove By-Pass, both of which would affect the course. This was a development to be watched closely.

Vandalism was getting worse, particularly in the summer months, and was an unwelcome development common to many golf clubs in the area. Indeed, it was necessary to inform the police about gangs of youths trespassing on the course shooting.

Traditionally golfers bought clubs, balls, shoes, bags and other equipment from their professional. In the old days, clubs and balls would have been made by that professional. But the huge buying power of chains of golf supermarkets, mail order companies and so on enabled them to offer the latest equipment at low prices. The opening of a Pro-Golf shop at Reddish Vale immediately threatened the potential earnings of the club's professional. There were consultations with Bramhall and Bramall Park, both of whom were also concerned, and it was thought that it may be necessary to increase the professional's retainer in order to compensate for loss of income.

Another perennial matter of concern was the speed of play in competitions. In September 1981 an experiment was made with two ball play, and the Committee was asked to point out to offenders, diplomatically, that they were playing too slowly.

**June 1983**  
COURSE PLANNER GUIDES  
INTRODUCED FOR THE FIRST TIME.

Matters were apparently coming to a head over the proposed by-pass. The club informed Stockport Borough Council in March 1982 of its interest in any land adjoining the course which may become available because of the building of the road. It was noted that the proposed route was now behind the 1st green and 2nd tee, along the line of Poise Brook. A public enquiry was to be held with work on the by-pass scheduled to commence in 1986.

A new drain on club resources surfaced in April 1982 when a survey revealed that dry rot was extensive in the clubhouse. The Committee was warned that it could cost up to £10,000 to eradicate it. But that was not all, remedial work required by the fire officer boosting the overall cost to around £15,000. In August it was found that the spread of dry rot was somewhat more extensive than originally thought.

An approach to the club was made by the neighbouring farmer, Mr Jim Platt (*son of Farmer Platt*), to discuss a means of preventing fishing in the pond by the 5th hole. In October it was decided to plant Blackthorn around the pond to deter anglers.

The administration of all golf clubs had grown in complexity and weight through the years, much of it as a result of legislation. When, in September 1982, it was noted that the Honorary Secretary and Assistant Honorary Secretary were both going to stand down in 1983, the Committee considered the possibility of employing a paid Secretary or Administrative Assistant, while also seeking candidates for these posts from within the membership. The first option was not pursued. One of the first jobs for the incoming secretary to concern himself with was the conversion of the old lead pipes in the club's water system to copper.

There was a new development in the relationship between the club and its Professional when Tattersall asked for permission also to service Marple's professional's shop. This was not really to the liking of the Committee. Then in December 1983 Tattersall requested permission this time to stock and staff the professional's shop at Mellor. Contractually he was not obliged to seek Stockport's permission, and was being perfectly straightforward in his request, but the Committee was concerned about the quality of service at Stockport, none the less.

In July 1984 it was learnt that there might be the possibility of the sale of the farm land adjacent to the 11th and 12th holes. At around the same time, a contract was received for a plot of land opposite Bosden Field

(NINETY THREE)

House which the club had agreed to purchase for £250 at the time of road widening project. Land acquisition had begun, even if only in a minor way.

It was in December 1984 that the club's Solicitor advised that the Club Rules and Bye Laws would have to be changed if the Club's registration certificate, which was due for renewal in May 1985, was not to be refused. In fact it was renewed, in May 1985, but only for one year, and on condition that work recommended in the Fire Officer's report was carried out as soon as possible. (*Principally to have a second fire exit from the Kinsey Bar*). Within the clubhouse the atmosphere was becoming slightly less formal. The relaxation of the dress rules was to be continued, casual dress permitted in the mixed lounge until 6 pm, and the dining room rules were relaxed to allow jackets without ties, also until 6 pm.

Land purchase began in earnest in November 1985. After various negotiations, the owner of Yew Tree Farm accepted a joint offer from the club and tenant farmer of £100,000 for the purchase of the farm. The farmer would give up the tenancy of the land to be purchased by the club. The club's share of the farm would be approximately 22 acres adjoining the 11th and 12th holes and the practice ground at a price of £65,000 plus a share of the costs, likely to be just over £2,000. In January a loan scheme to pay for the land purchase was instigated. Unsecured units of £250 each, interest free, were offered. There was also a modest levy. These loans were not only to purchase the farmland, but also to fund an extension to the snooker room, improvements to the dining room, and instal the required fire escape. Each loan unit carried an



THE EXTENSION BEGINS WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FIRE ESCAPE

allowance of £17.50 to be offset against the annual subscription. The scheme provided for repayment of the loans over a ten year period by equal annual instalments. In June it was proposed to apply for planning permission to use the newly acquired farmland for leisure activities. By July the final amount subscribed was £90,000.

While it is undoubtedly an honour to hold office in a golf club, it can be expensive. In May 1986, after meetings with Bramall Park and Bramhall, it was decided to give the Captain, President, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer an allowance equivalent to a full member's subscription to reimburse expenses incurred as a result of holding these offices.

With the club's licence due for renewal again in September 1986, the club's Solicitor recommended new Bye Laws to comply with Licensing Laws. The only significant change was the elimination of the clause giving the Captain a casting vote in the event of an equality of votes at a club meeting. It was a successful amendment, the licence being renewed this time for three years.

As the new practice ground was now available, practising between the 12th and 13th fairways was discontinued. In the autumn of 1986 the first competition for juniors took place and was a success. But there were two unforeseen problems: where should the presentation take place and what should the juniors wear in the main lounge? It was found necessary to write to the ladies seeking permission to use their lounge



1986  
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FIRST MENTION OF A REQUEST FROM A MEMBER TO USE A 'BUGGY CART' ON THE COURSE. AGREED.



January 1988  
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AFTER DISCUSSION IT WAS AGREED THAT THE DECISION NOT TO SELL DRINKS BY THE BOTTLE TO MEMBERS FOR CONSUMPTION ON THE PREMISES SHOULD NOT AFFECT THE CUSTOM OF MEMBERS 'BORROWING' DRINKS BY THE BOTTLE.

members playing in a monthly medal competition were allowed to use the gentlemen's lounge after the completion of their round.

A new twist in the saga of the by-pass arose in April 1987. Objectors to the blue route proposed an alternative red route passing through the golf course, 200 yards from the clubhouse, on a line roughly from the 3rd hole to the 11th. Objections were lodged on the grounds that the golf course would no longer be viable. Advice was sought from the Stockport Director of Works, who suggested objecting to the red route on environmental grounds. It was also necessary to consult Dave Thomas on the potential architectural impact of either route.

On the course it was agreed that there would be permanent markers for the blue and yellow courses, plus movable markers which could be moved up to ten yards in front of the permanent markers. In addition there would be white markers from which members and visitors would play during the week. It was ruled that casual visitors, not playing with a member, must now be members of a recognised golf club. Unfortunately the course was not in the best of health and in October 1987 a consultant's report noted that the greens were sickly, either underfed or fed too late, and had been cut too short. In March and April 1988 the course was closed for sixteen days because of waterlogging.

Once more the blue and red routes popped up in February 1988. An alternative red route, known as G route, was put forward, which would affect the golf club in the same manner as the red. It was objected to on the same grounds. In April yet another modification to the red route

Summer 88  
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SLOW PLAY - IT HAD TAKEN OVER 5 HOURS TO PLAY 18 HOLES ON INVITATION DAY. SIMILAR DELAYS HAD OCCURRED ON CAPTAIN'S DAY.

between 4pm and 6pm on Sundays if there was a competition. It was also agreed that formal dress for juniors under 16 should be a pullover and tie. The times when juniors could play the course needed to be addressed and a new Bye Law was passed setting these out: a) on weekdays after 5pm but they must play with an adult member, b) on Saturdays when a competition is being played after 5pm, otherwise before 11am and after 5pm, c) on Sundays and Bank Holidays after 11am and, again, they must play with an adult member. The following summer it was decided that junior

was submitted and, yet again, the club sent in an objection. The blue route, which did not pass through the course, was objected to by Offerton Community Associates. They proposed the red route, which would pass through the course in such a way as to render it unviable. A solicitor specialising in planning was appointed to act on the club's behalf. But all the financial effects of the various enquiries and legal representation and advice were being felt, and subscriptions would have to be increased to take this into account.

During the summer of 1988 the ladies put in a request that new holes be cut for their competitions. In response it was agreed that new holes

**Scientist's ashes are scattered by rocket**

By Richard Savill



Mr Jeffrey Thorp wanted to go out with a bang

light. He felt that scattering dust into the sunset might be a poetic and symbolic gesture at the end of his life.

"I think he felt he wanted to end his life with a splendid flourish. He was doing experiments all his life. He was working on six projects the day he died."

THE family of a bio-chemist tried to fulfil his final wish that they should "colour the sunset with his ashes" during a short ceremony on a wind-swept Cheshire hillside at the weekend.

Friends of Mr Jeffrey Thorp joined his widow, Janet, and other members of the family on Kerridge Ridge, near Macclesfield, Cheshire, for a fireworks display in which they let off 28 rockets containing his ashes.

"Jeff wanted that," said Mrs Janet Thorp, whose husband died in April, aged 72. "It was his dream to go out with a real bang, colouring the sunset with his ashes."

Unfortunately for the assembled group it rained as they performed the 15-minute ceremony on Saturday night. "It was a pity it wasn't a calm, golden sunset," said Mrs Thorp. "Jeff's ashes would have added more colour then."

Before letting off the rockets on the hillside overlooking her home at Rainow, Mrs Thorp had to get official clearance from the Civil Aviation Authority at Manchester Airport.

Mr Thorp's son, Peter, 10, said: "Dad would have been proud. Of course he would have liked all his ashes in one huge rocket, one that could go way into space. It was impossible to get one so big."

Among those at the ceremony was Dr Desmond Fitzgerald, a pharmacologist and colleague, who said of Mr Thorp: "He was a serious and distinguished scientist. He developed a unique instrument for measuring the size of lipid particles in blood for the treatment of heart disease.

"He had spent a lot of time working on the scattering of

JEFF - A LONG STANDING MEMBER - HAD AN UNUSUAL END

would be cut for up to five competitions at their request. After a letter had been received from the LGU handicap adviser for East Cheshire, it was later agreed to cut new holes for six ladies' competitions.

It was generally agreed that the course was no longer in peak condition and at the Annual General Meeting in September 1988 many members complained about the state of the course. The Committee structure, which gave little continuity, and the management of staff were also criticised. The incoming Committee meeting in October had to address the financial future. Their discussions showed that over £15,000 would be required for maintenance of the course and £60,000 required over four years to replace worn out equipment.

Towards the close of 1988 it was noted that the proposed Poll Tax was to be introduced in 1990 and could seriously affect the club's rates. Therefore the club applied to the local authority for 100% rate relief in 1989/90. This 100% rate relief was turned down but the Metropolitan Borough of Stockport agreed to review the position of clubs which might be seriously affected by the planned changes in the rating system in plenty of time for the April 1990 introduction.

Course condition continued to cause concern. In May 1989, a visiting society, writing to complain about the state of the course, was given a £4 refund per head. Green fees were then £12 on a weekday. Temporary greens were in use for nearly 4 weeks until May 17th.

By June 1989 the Secretary of State for the Environment and Transport had become involved in the debate about the proposed by-pass. The Secretary agreed with the Inspector's report that the published blue route should be adopted. This route would not significantly affect the course. However, a proposed roundabout with the A626 Offerton Road might affect the 1st green. Following the blue route inquiry, an oil company approached the club with a view to purchasing part of the club's land near the lay-by, hoping to build a service station and motel there when the by-pass is opened. Naturally, the club was concerned and wrote to the Department of Transport to register this.

Increasingly, strictly enforced drink-driving laws and general changes in drinking habits began to affect golf clubs as a whole during the 1970s and '80s. Up until 1989 the cost of indoor staff wages at Stockport had been covered by bar profits, but this was

no longer the case. Some means of restoring the balance would have to be investigated.

Following the concerns raised over the condition of the course, discussions were held with greens staff at which the club announced its intention to advertise for a Course Manager. In August 1989 the club's first Course Manager was appointed, Paul Pearse. Discussions also took place on the acquisition of a club computer.

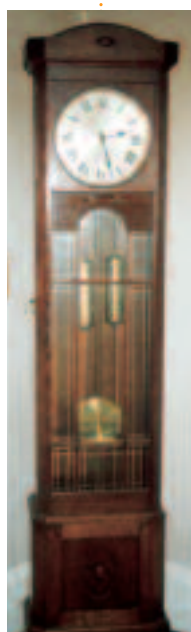
Yet another change of tack on the proposed by-pass came in September 1989. This time the Department of Transport confirmed that the Minister had accepted the department's recommendation to make the brown route a '*protected*' route. This was the link to High Lane/Disley from the North South by-pass. It would cross the southernmost tip of the course affecting the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th holes. In October plans were received which indicated that the roundabout would pass through the 1st green.

Changes were afoot around the premises as 1989 drew to a close. The Professional was about to vacate the bungalow and plans were drawn up to alter it and the professional's shop, incorporating a battery charging facility and trolley room. Greens staff accommodation was to be improved. The estimated cost was £20,500. At the same time, improvements to the kitchens were to be made, to provide better facilities which would improve both efficiency and hygiene. £40,000 was

the estimate for this. To fund these and other proposed expenditure the Finance Committee suggested:

- i) An increase in membership of up to 25.
- ii) To examine the staging of a major Charity Golf Day in 1990 (such as Mencap).
- iii) To consider the introduction of 1-2 fruit machines.
- iv) To examine the feasibility of corporate days.
- v) To publicise the course and its facilities with the aim of attracting larger visiting societies and increasing temporary green fees.

Happily, only some of these proposals were adapted: in particular, fruit machines have not, even today, appeared in the clubhouse while the club has been reasonably successful in attracting visiting parties at a level which contributes significant, badly needed income.



THE CLOCK WITH NO  
NUMERAL 12, AND TWO 11S